

## Maryland Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission

### Meeting #34

**Date:** Monday, October 17, 2022

**Time:** 11:30 am–1:30 pm

#### Attendance:

David Armenti	X	Kirkland Hall	X	
Iris Barnes	X	Elizabeth Hughes	ABS	
Simone Barret	ABS	Tieshase Dupree Wilson	X	
(DeNeen Brown)	(ret)	Gary Norma	ABS	
Charles Chavis	ABS	Carl Snowden	ABS	
Roger Davidson	X	Marshall Stevenson	X	
Maya Davis	ABS	Stephanie Thompson	X	
Omar Eaton-Martinez	ABS	Zenita Hurley	X	
David Fakunle	X	Kristine McFarlane	X	
Chris Haley	X	Will Schwarz	X	
Nicolas Creary	X	Joy Sarimakin	X	

#### Members of the public present:

Linda Pardoe, Emily Oland Squires, Amy Millan, Gail Crichlow, Diane Teichert, Cheryl Jackson, Cheryl Mcleod, Elaine Rice Bachmann, Gary Norman, Jean Aden, Annie Wood, Brett M. Tyler, Teisha Dupree-Wilson

#### Call to Order:

Chair Fakunle called the meeting to order at 11:35am.

#### Approval of Minutes:

Chair Fakunle informed the meeting that there were no minutes for the September meeting. The recordings will therefore be accepted for the records in place of minutes.

#### Public Comments:

Chair Fakunle thanked everyone for joining the meeting and urged members of the public to introduce themselves in the comment section.

#### Committee Reports:

Chair Fakunle stated that we are tabling the logistics and research committee report

#### Logistics Committee report

The logistics report is focused on the upcoming hearing.

#### Research Committee- Commissioner David Amenti

Commissioner Armenti stated that the research committee report by stating that the Research Committee is similarly focused on the cases related to the upcoming hearings. According to him, the Anne Arundel County hearing was a powerful event with several components that impacted the audience and mentioned the upcoming Wicomico and Somerset hearing. He also acknowledged the publication of Dr Chavis and his students in terms connecting and collecting information within the community. Also, that The Nab Center is an amazing repository of research. He encouraged that we broadcast the work of the commission in different circles so we can have access to all sort of information, connections and source materials that may come through the process. He also spoke about the need to have updated narratives more publicly accessible.

Commissioner Creary asked if the committee have thought about getting every narrative to the archives so that they can be uploaded or kept in the legacy of slavery website for more robust, nuanced presentation of the cases, so that we can have a balance of perspectives on some of these cases that we've been able research on, this would be helpful especially for future record.

Commissioner Armenti responded that he agreed that it will help to distill the research down into a digestible narrative and would push toward that goal.

### **Reconciliation and Justice Committee**

Commissioner Creary said the Reconciliation and Justice Committee had a zoom meeting on September 26<sup>th</sup> to reiterate the urgency of their task, and the time available for develop recommendations since that is the primary charge of the of the committees, he stated that they also discussed on getting an extension in other to have enough time to write the recommendations, and said the hearings will be use as a tool for data collection, for getting information about the recommendations coming from community, families and descendants spoke about community outreach, and how we need to be in collaboration with various community organizations and the various local coalitions. He states that it's the responsibility of the commission to provide information by reaching out and maintaining collaboration. He said they also spoke about media strategy, pairing with those who want to participate with the commissioners. They discussed about using subpoena power as a commission and the idea of transcribing the hearings or using some of the Emmett till money to pay someone to write the draft of the final report, based on recommendations from the Commission.

Commissioner Armenti mentioned that some of these discussions have come up before but cannot remember the conclusion. He recommended that as the committee progresses with compiling, sponsoring state delegate should be prioritized.

**Commissioner Schwarz** suggested that we make sure that the link for their live stream is set up and posted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting and it's imperative that there is a signal up 15 minutes before the start of the meeting, so we don't lose our online viewers. He also recommended that at hearings we should make sure that we get a sense of the damage and impact that lynching have had in the communities because that is one of the three charges of the law that created this Commission.

**Chair Fakunle** thanked the commissioners and went on to speak about the next item on the agenda which was the feedback from the previous hearing session in Anne Arundel while adding that members of the public should feel free to use the chat to provide their feedback on the hearing session as a boost for the next in Wicomico County. He recommended that we make sure the streaming links are made ahead of time, so no one must guess as to where things are happening. He concluded by saying that all participants and their charts will be acknowledged in real time.

Commissioner Creary commended Stephanie Thompson and the staff for a great job of putting the hearing together. He said what caught his attention at the Anne Arundel hearing was that as the descendant's gave their testimonies, having a counter narrative would have provided more understanding of the situation so we should avail ourselves of the work of the research committee and of our colleagues at heritage associates as this will be useful to give a counter narrative from what we get from the newspapers of the day. He suggests we take advantage of the work that we've into permanent record.

Chair Fakunle agreed with commissioner Creary that it is important to make space for counter narratives. He stated that he was very happy with how it turned out. He appreciated the great work Stephanie, local coalition and the commissioners put together to make it a great experience. The challenges of having a virtual session during the COVID-19 lockdown but glad for the last in person hearing session. Chair Fakunle affirmed that the role of culture should be reflective in our hearings and that the simplest and most powerful way to do this is at the hearing is by playing a song strange fruit by Billie Holiday as this will captures the essence of racial terrorism and he believed that it will sets the tone of the hearing. He went on to acknowledge commissioner McCloud of African American history and culture who observed that more attention needs to be put into trauma and counseling resources during the hearing session. Stephanie thanks the commissioner and said she will certainly make sure to let the audience know that we have counseling services available.

Commissioner McCloud had a question about voting information though there wasn't much need for that at Anne Arundel which is probably ok but there should be more with the Eastern Shore because all the information is up now and it is gearing towards the general election so anything that can get people prepared for that either by general information or just about encouraging voting. Chair Fakunle agreed that it was a great idea as long as it not a partisan.

Commissioner Haley followed up with the thoughts of Commissioner McCloud on trauma assessment that he has discussed with the someone and he think they were trying to plan a follow up so that it can be incorporated perhaps at the beginning or end of the agenda He also stated that he admires the idea of mentioning names and song or video put together for hearing that represents racial healing, racial justice.

Chair Fakunle thanked Commissioner Haley and affirmed that he is opened to all forms of creative expression and creative energy that encourages the healing process in all the hearing sessions as he believes we are setting precedent as a commission. He then reached out to fellow commissioners and members of the public for any suggestions that may be useful for the next hearing sessions at Wicomico County.

Cheryl Mcleod a member of the public suggested that having descendants give testimony would be helpful if they come before a break so that people exhausted, and the energy of the story is not lost. She further added that the public will have something to reflect on while on the break as well as its our priority is to always to give the descendants space and time to honor their ancestors because that is what we are charged to do as a body and the public will also be more relative to the expert narrative and information when they are read. Chair Fakunle appreciated this feedback and charged that Stephanie incorporates this change into the agenda protocol to honor the humanity of their person before we get into the circumstance of their death.

Stephanie thanked everyone for their feedback stating that their contributions will be incorporated as they come in. She also thanked Cheryl for the feedback and volunteer work done. She went on to speak of the upcoming hearing that two descendants from both victims will be present. She explained that some of their testimonies will come before the break and that some of the break will incorporate emotional support, so it won't have to wait till the end of the hearing. Chair Fakunle emphasized that if the descendants are available, they will be given priority to honor their ancestors. He also responded to a question asked about how we publicize our hearing. He said we share it through our website, we reach out to media outlets, to various networks as well as connect with our local coalitions, local leaders of wherever the hearing will be happening and encourage them to let people know that we're coming but acknowledge there can be room for improvement and stated that we are looking for commissioners who have time and energy to help with the publicity of where the hearing sessions are happening next especially those commissioners who are assigned to those regions, he entreat that we can also put it on our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram whatever outlets within our capacities.

Chair Fakunle talked about the upcoming hearing sessions starting with Wicomico on Saturday and confirmed that the time is 9am to 1pm.

Stephanie confirmed the time and gave update on the upcoming hearing sessions at Wicomico and Somerset. She thanked everyone for the work done in the past week and went on to discuss Wicomico logistics and state that everything is in place for the event. She added that there might be slight change to our videographer vendor for both upcoming hearings. She stated that there will be a virtual walk through for Wicomico tomorrow morning and Wednesday for Somerset just to make sure things are in place. She thanked commissioner Wills on his comment on the signal not being up immediately which she was not aware, but she is working on making sure that little hiccup like that doesn't happen again for other hearings, mentioning that overall, she agrees with what everyone has earlier stated about marketing for upcoming hearings and what the commission is doing as a whole in the next year particularly on promotional releases. She mentioned that the next two hearing locations are larger

than Anne Arundel, so the hearing will need more promotion. She also mentioned that living and growing will attend both hearing.

Commissioner Stevenson asked about getting the press releases out and if we have a listing they are sent to. Stephanie answered yes, and that they are sent out to general media in the DC/Baltimore area and they could have more conversation on it when they meet on Wednesday.

Diane Teichert asked if hearing links are going to be posted and available to the public. Stephanie answered yes and confirmed with Emily.

Amy Miller also re-emphasizing the importance of press coverage for these events not just regionally, locally, or statewide but nationally as these are historic first time ever truth and reconciliation hearings on the topic of lynching and will be worthwhile taking the time to really leverage any media availability. Stephanie agreed on this and said Dr Chavis is working on it and has visited some communities and suggested that everyone should continue to make the effort to reach out as more hearing will be coming in 2023.

Kirkland Hall from Somerset mentioned that a young lady worked with them by the name of Kerry Sanders who has some marketing experience and suggest he would have her contact Stephanie she has access and have information on who to contact, she could be an asset to the commission.

Zanita thanked Stephanie for the great job she has done and for agreeing to stay until a replacement is found and asked that if anyone know someone who will be interested in filling the space. Stephanie mentioned that she hopes she will be able to help as the next PM comes on board because we got more hearings to do next year so that the process can move forward, and the events can get on the calendar. She also welcomes Ms. Joy who was joining the meeting for the first time and mentioned that she going to be assisting with administrative work and support for the commission.

**Announcements:**

Commissioner Amenti recommended highlight on how to improve the work as we move forward over the coming weeks and that anyone with question can reach out to any member of the commission.

**Meeting Adjourned:**

Commissioner Amenti thanked everyone present for their time. The meeting was adjourned at 12:47pm.